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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4238
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0126
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0056
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3841
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2119
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0214
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0786
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0952
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0094
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000088

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP CLAIMS VICTORY OVER KHALILOV

REF: 07 TASHKENT 1855

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: According to government sources, Parliament Speaker Erkin Khalilov has been replaced by Dilorom Toshmuhammadova, the leader of the pro-government Adolat Social-Democratic party and one of the four officially-recognized presidential candidates who participated in the December 2007 election (septel). A human rights contact first reported Khalilov's firing to poloff in December, alleging that President Karimov asked Khalilov to resign for interfering in a criminal case against a group of teenagers who allegedly attacked one of his sons. While Khalilov's intervention in the case of the five teenagers could have served as a convenient pretext for his firing, the real reason probably goes deeper and could be connected to his close affiliation with Prime Minister Mirziyayev, who also has been rumored to be on his way out. End summary.

KHALILOV'S FIRING FIRST REPORTED BY HUMAN RIGHTS CONTACT

12. (C) On December 11, independent journalist and Ezgulik Deputy Chairman Abdurakhmon Tashanov told poloff that President Karimov demanded the resignation of Khalilov for interfering in a criminal case against a group of teenagers who allegedly assaulted one of his sons and were given long prison terms as a result. According to Tashanov, Ezgulik publicized the case and successfully lobbied the Supreme Court to reduce the prison sentences given to the teenagers. Tashanov further alleged that Ezgulik's involvement in the case was an important factor in Khalilov's firing, representing what he believed to be a rare victory for a human rights organization in Uzbekistan.

TEENAGERS SENTENCED FOR ASSAULTING KHALILOV'S SON

13. (C) In December 2006, police arrested a group of teenagers in Tashkent for allegedly assaulting Sherzod Khalilov, the son of Erkin Khalilov. According to Ezgulik, Khalilov had the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) open a criminal case against the teenagers: T. Nurmetov, D. Akhmetov, A. Djaililov, S. Alimov, and S. Rakhshiev. All five were convicted in May and sentenced to between nine and 16 years' imprisonment. After their conviction, the teenagers were incarcerated in Karakalpakstan's Jaslyk prison, which was originally built to house political prisoners and is notorious for its poor living conditions.

EZGULIK TAKES UP THE TEENAGERS' CASE

14. (C) Starting in September, Ezgulik started to publicize the teenagers' case through internet press releases. It also intervened by writing letters on behalf of the teenagers to the Supreme Court, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs alleging that serious procedural violations had occurred at their trial. Surprisingly, Ezgulik received an official response from the Supreme Court dated November 26 stating that after reviewing their case, the Supreme Court decided to reduce their sentences by between two to five years each. Poloff has seen the Supreme Court's response, a scanned copy of which was distributed over the internet.

SECOND GROUP OF TEENAGERS ALSO SENTENCED?

15. (C) Tashanov further alleged that Khalilov abused his powers to lock up a second group of four teenagers who had an altercation with his other son in Bostinlyk near the Charvak reservoir outside of Tashkent. He said that Ezgulik had become aware of the second group of teenagers from the first group, who apparently ran into each other at a prison transfer site in Navoi province. Tashanov said that Ezgulik was also investigating the second case and would soon send out an internet press release including their names. As of January 23, Ezgulik still had not released further information on the second group of teenagers.

KHALILOV REPORTEDLY ASKED TO RESIGN BY PRESIDENT KARIMOV

16. (C) According to Tashanov, at a Presidential Apparatus meeting in early December, President Karimov demanded that Khalilov hand in a resignation letter within the next few days. Tashanov left his sources unnamed, but said that they were individuals present at the meeting. He said that the official announcement of Khalilov's resignation would be made later during a plenary session of Parliament (as now appears to have been the case). While explaining why he was firing Khalilov, Karimov reportedly raised the case of the five teenagers as an example of how Khalilov had abused his powers while in office.

WAS KHALILOV ACTUALLY ASSAULTED IN NOVEMBER?

17. (C) In early November, it was also rumored that Khalilov himself was assaulted in Tashkent by unknown assailants. Tashanov, however, disputed that Khalilov was ever assaulted. He said that Khalilov told him so during a telephone interview and instead alleged that the story was simply a rumor spread by his political enemies. In a November 22 story posted on its website, Ozodlik, quoting Tashanov, reported that Khalilov had told a journalist from AP that the alleged assault had not occurred. As further evidence that the attack never happened, Tashanov pointed to the fact that a criminal investigation into the alleged incident was closed within a matter of days.

18. (C) When asked by poloff, Embassy political specialist FSN continued to believe that Khalilov was assaulted, most likely by National Security Service (NSS) officers, on orders from the President or another high-level official. He

believed that Khalilov was targeted because of his alleged close ties to Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyaev. He pointed to a November 26 article on the independent news website Centrasia.ru alleging that Mirziyaev was placed under house arrest for three weeks after arranging an elaborate wedding for his daughter at which each guest was obliged to hand over at least 10,000 dollars as a gift. The article also states that an unnamed official of a recent Russian delegation described Mirziyaev as having the instincts of "a head of state," reportedly upsetting President Karimov.

COMMENT

19. (C) However modest, Ezgulik's victory is rare indeed - human rights organizations in Uzbekistan are seldom successful in their appeals to the Supreme Court or other government bodies. On the other hand, while Khalilov's intervention in the case of the five teenagers could have served as a convenient pretext for his firing, the real reason probably goes deeper and could be connected to his close affiliation with Prime Minister Mirziyaev, who also has been rumored to be on his way out (reftel).

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